

REMARKS

Please cancel Claims 11, 36, and 49. The claims remaining in the present application are Claims 1-10, 12-35, 37-48, and 50-57. The Examiner is thanked for performing a thorough search. Claims 1, 21, 24, 35, and 48 have been amended. No new matter has been added.

NOTICE OF NON-COMPLIANCE

A Notice of Non-compliance was received due to an incomplete listing of the withdrawn claims. The listing of claims has been amended to include the text of the withdrawn claims.

CLAIM REJECTIONS

35 U.S.C. §103(a)

Claims 1-10, 12-16, 18-21, 24-25, 27-28, 30-31, 34-35, 37-48 and 50-57

Per the instant Office Action, Claims 1-10, 12-16, 18-21, 24-25, 27-28, 30-31, 34-35, 37-48 and 50-57 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,549,916 by Sedlar et al. (referred to hereinafter as “Sedlar”) in view of United States Patent No. 6,941,304 by Gainey et al., (hereinafter referred to as “Gainey”). Claims 1, 21, 35, and 48 are independent claims. Claims 2-10, 12-16, 18-20, 24-25, 27-28, 30, 31, 34, 37, and 50-57 are dependent on independent Claims 1, 21, 35, and 48 and include the recitations of independent Claims 1, 21, 35, and 48. Hence, by demonstrating that Sedlar and Gainey do not show or suggest the limitations of Claims 1, 21, 35, and 48, it is also demonstrated that Sedlar and Gainey do not show or suggest the embodiments of Claims 1-10, 12-16, 18-21, 24-25, 27-28, 30-31, 34-35, 37-48 and 50-57.

“As reiterated by the Supreme Court in *KSR*, the framework for the objective analysis for determining obviousness under 35 U.S.C. 103 is stated in *Graham v. John Deere Co.*, 383 U.S. 1, 148 USPQ 459 (1966). Obviousness is a question of law based on underlying factual inquiries” including “[a]scertaining the differences between the claimed invention and the prior art” (MPEP 2141(II)). “In determining the differences between the prior art and the claims, the question under 35 U.S.C. 103 is not whether the differences themselves would have been obvious, but whether the claimed invention as a whole would have been obvious” (emphasis in original; MPEP 2141.02(I)). Applicants note that “[t]he prior art reference (or references when combined) need not teach or suggest all the claim limitations, however, Office personnel must explain why the difference(s) between the prior art and the claimed invention would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art” (emphasis added; MPEP 2141(III)).

Applicants respectfully submit that the claimed embodiments as a whole overcome the rejections under 35 U.S.C. §103(a), as the claims are neither taught nor suggested by Sedlar alone or

in combination with Gainey, and that Office personnel have not explained why differences would have been obvious. Independent Claim 1 recites (emphasis added),

A method for enhancing communication within a community, the method comprising:

- (a) establishing a hierarchical structure for organizing communications between a plurality of users within the community;
- (b) distributing control through selection of inherited parameters of said hierarchical structure to at least one of said plurality of users, wherein said inherited parameters comprise access parameters defining access by said plurality of users to said communications organized within said hierarchical structure and wherein said access parameters are selected from the group consisting of an inclusive access in which access to each of said stored communications in said hierarchical structure is allowed except where excluded by said inherited parameters and an exclusive access in which access to each of said stored communications in said hierarchical structure is allowed only where explicitly assigned;
- (c) storing in said hierarchical structure at least a portion of said communications received from said plurality of users from at least one of a plurality of input devices in relation to at least one of a plurality of topics that is user selected;
- (z) providing a link to a resource associated with said at least a portion of said communications that is stored, wherein said link is available for access by authorized users of said plurality of users;
- (d) prioritizing said at least a portion of said communications within said hierarchical structure, wherein an initial thread of said plurality of communications is assigned a higher priority than a response to a thread of said plurality of communications;
- (e) presenting to at least a one of said plurality of users through said at least one of a plurality of input devices a selected portion of said communications stored in said hierarchical structure, wherein said selected portion of said communications are related

under said at least one of a plurality of topics that is user selected;

- (f) enabling dynamic interaction through further contributions of communications by said at least a one of said plurality of users through said at least one of a plurality of input devices in response to presentation of said selected portion of said communications within said hierarchical structure, wherein said further contributions of communications are stored and accessed within said hierarchical structure in relation to said topic, wherein said further contributions are associated with at least one discussion thread comprising a recorded communication under said at least one of a plurality of topics that is conducted between participating users of said plurality of users; and
- (g) presenting to at least a one of said plurality of users at least a portion of said plurality of communications based on said prioritization.

Applicants respectfully submit that the claims overcome the rejections under 35 U.S.C. §103(a), as the claims are neither taught nor suggested by Sedlar and Gainey.

Applicants submit that Sedlar does not disclose or suggest the feature of distributing control through selection of inherited parameters of a hierarchical structure to at least one of a plurality of users, wherein the inherited parameters comprise access parameters defining access by the plurality of users to the communications organized within the hierarchical structure and wherein the access parameters are selected from the group consisting of an inclusive access in which access to each of the stored communications in the hierarchical structure is allowed except where excluded by said inherited parameters and an exclusive access in which access to each of the stored communications in the hierarchical structure is allowed only where explicitly assigned as recited in Claim 1. It is noted that independent Claims 21, 35, and 48 recite similar features.

Applicants submit that Sedlar does not teach the features of “prioritizing said at least a portion of said communications within said hierarchical structure, wherein an initial thread of said plurality of communications is assigned a higher priority than a response to a thread of said plurality of communications” and “presenting to at least a one of said plurality of users at least a portion of said plurality of communications based on said prioritization” (emphasis added), recited in Claim 1. The rejection cites column 36, lines 15-31 of Sedlar to disclose or suggest the above feature. The

Applicant understands that the priority property discussed by Sedlar with regard to e-mail documents is not typically used by one skilled in the art in assigning a higher priority to an initial thread of a plurality of communications than is assigned to a response thread of the plurality of communications. The Applicants understand the priority property disclosed by Sedlar to indicate whether a particular instance of e-mail is assigned a “high,” “normal,” or “low” priority. This priority property is typically used to indicate to a recipient of the e-mail whether the e-mail should be read and/or responded to quickly (e.g., for a high priority message), or whether the e-mail can be read and/or responded to later (e.g., for a normal or low priority message). The Applicants submit that the priority property disclosed by Sedlar is not typically understood by one skilled in the art to assign a higher priority to an initial thread of a plurality of communications than is assigned to a response thread of the plurality of communications as recited in Claim 1. More specifically, the Applicants submit that Sedlar does not expressly or inherently disclose assign a higher priority to an initial thread of a plurality of communications than is assigned to a response thread of the plurality of communications.

Similarly, the Applicants submit that Sedlar does not teach, “an initial priority-based content placement module for determining a priority assignment for an initial communication of said plurality of communications” and “a response priority-based content placement module for determining a priority assignment for a response communication of said plurality of communications, wherein said priority assignment for a response communication is lower than said priority assignment for an initial communication” (emphasis added), elements of Claim 21.

Similarly, the Applicants submit that Sedlar does not teach, prioritizing an order of said portion of said information, “wherein an initial thread of said information is assigned a higher priority than a response to a thread of said information” and “presenting said portion of said information that is ordered to said user for review, wherein said presentation is based on said prioritization” (emphasis added), elements of Claims 35 and 48.

Furthermore, the Applicants respectfully submit that Gainey does not overcome the shortcomings of Sedlar. The applicants understand Gainey to teach an “enterprise email system processes incoming email using a set of configurable rules that examine each message for a specific attribute state condition and invoke a configurable action when the attribute satisfies the condition,” [Abstract, FIG. 4]. In other words, the Applicants understand Gainey as teaching the manner in which the rules for processing e-mail are executed rather than assigning a priority to the message itself. Specifically, the Applicants submit that Gainey teaches “[t]he incoming email receiver 120 makes sure that no routing rule actions conflict with each other” [Col. 6, lines 15-18]. In lines 19-22, Gainey teaches (emphasis added):

“Action priority is determined by the rule’s order in the rule list. For example, the first mail receiver rule in the mail receiver list has the highest priority. Some rules, however, take priority over order.”

The Applicants again assert that Gainey teaches that the order of rules in the mail receiver rule list determines the priority assigned to processing rules. The Applicants understand this teaching of Gainey to suggest that whatever mail receiver rule is first in the mail receiver list has the highest priority. However, Gainey is silent with regard to assigning a priority of any sort to an initial, or subsequent thread in a plurality of communications. Furthermore, the Applicants assert that the cited portion of Gainey does not expressly or inherently disclose the feature of assigning a higher priority to an initial thread of a plurality of communications than is assigned to a response thread of the plurality of communications. Thus, the applicants assert that Gainey teaches a prioritization of rules, rather than a prioritization of communications, as cited by as recited in Claims 1, 21, 35, and 48.

The Applicants assert that Gainey again teaches the prioritization of workflow actions (column 6 lines 42-44) with reference to the cited internal Same Sender Route action (Column 6, lines 51-54) cited in the rejection. The Applicants assert that lines 51-54 of Column 6 are still refer to determining the order in which mail receiver rules are processed. Gainey teaches in Column 6, lines 51-54 (emphasis added):

“An internal Same Sender Route action takes precedence over all over (sic) workflow actions such as route and forward & track.”

The Applicants assert that Gainey again teaches the prioritization of workflow actions in the processing of messages rather than a prioritization of the messages themselves. Thus, the Applicants again submit that Gainey does not expressly or inherently disclose the feature of assigning a higher priority to an initial thread of a plurality of communications than is assigned to a response thread as recited in Claims 1, 21, 35, and 48.

As was previously discussed, the Applicants understand Gainey to teach “[k]eep thread ownership—Specifies if the same user that responds to a particular incoming email message should receive all subsequent response. Placing an identifier in the subject or body field of the outgoing response email enables the mail receiver to identify and reply to the outgoing response email,” [Col. 7, lines 55-60]. The Applicants submit that placing an identifier in the subject or body field is not the

same as “an initial thread of said plurality of communications is assigned a higher priority than a response to a thread of said plurality of communications,” as is claimed, for at least because an identifier has an arbitrary priority rather than a higher priority. The Applicants assert that Gainey does not expressly or inherently disclose that the initial thread of a plurality of communications is assigned a higher priority than is assigned to a response thread as recited in Claims 1, 21, 35, and 48. Thus, the Applicants assert that Sedlar and Gainey do not explicitly or inherently disclose the features recited in Claims 1, 21, 35, and 48 as set forth in MPEP 2141(III).

Furthermore, the Applicants respectfully submit that Dennis does not overcome the shortcomings of Sedlar and Gainey. Claim 1 further recites (emphasis added):

“distributing control through selection of inherited parameters of said hierarchical structure to at least one of said plurality of users, wherein said inherited parameters comprise access parameters defining access by said plurality of users to said communications organized within said hierarchical structure and wherein said access parameters are selected from the group consisting of an inclusive access in which access to each of said stored communications in said hierarchical structure is allowed except where excluded by said inherited parameters and an exclusive access in which access to each of said stored communications in said hierarchical structure is allowed only where explicitly assigned...”

Claims 21, 35, and 48 recite similar features. The Applicants submit that the combination of Sedlar and Gainey does not expressly or inherently disclose the features recited above. The Office Action cites Dennis et al (U.S. Patent No. 6,466,932 B1), referred to hereinafter as “Dennis,” as disclosing the above recited features with reference to Claims 11, 36, and 49. The Applicants assert that Dennis does not expressly or inherently disclose the features recited above. More specifically, Dennis does not expressly or inherently disclose the features of “prioritizing said at least a portion of said communications within said hierarchical structure, wherein an initial thread of said plurality of communications is assigned a higher priority than a response to a thread of said plurality of communications” and “presenting to at least a one of said plurality of users at least a portion of said plurality of communications based on said prioritization” (emphasis added), recited in Claim 1.

The Applicants further submit that Dennis does not explicitly or inherently disclose the feature of access parameters selected from the group consisting of an inclusive access in which access to each of said stored communications in a hierarchical structure is allowed except where excluded by the inherited parameters and an exclusive access in which access to each of the stored communications in a hierarchical structure is allowed only where explicitly assigned as recited in

Claims 1, 21, 35, and 48. Instead, the Applicants understand Dennis to disclose that users are either assigned to, “an exclusion list of users and groups to which the policy will not apply and/or an inclusion list of users and groups to which the policy will apply.” The Applicants understand Dennis to teach that in one embodiment users are only allowed access to objects based upon being included in the inclusion list. Otherwise, access is denied (Column 13, lines 15-19 and Column 13, lines 22-29). Instead, Applicants understand Dennis to show that the exclusion list lists users and groups to which an access policy does not apply. Thus, if a user is on the exclusion list, the Applicant understands Dennis to teach that the user is not allowed any access to However, Dennis is silent regarding an exclusive access in which access to each of the stored communications in a hierarchical structure is allowed only where explicitly assigned. Thus, Dennis does not explicitly or inherently disclose the features recited in Claims 1, 21, 35, and 48 as set forth in MPEP 2141(III).

As Sedlar, Gainey, and Dennis do not teach each and every claim limitation of Claim 1 (as discussed above), and as Office personnel have not explained why difference(s) between the prior art and the claimed invention would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art, and as Claims 21, 35, and 48 recite similar features as Claim 1, Applicants respectfully submit that Claims 1, 21, 35, and 48 overcome the 35 U.S.C. §103(a) rejection. As Claims 2-10, 12-20, 22-34, 37-47, and 50-57 are pending from an allowable base Claims and reciting additional features, Applicants respectfully submit that 2-10, 12-20, 22-34, 37-47, and 50-57 also overcome the 35 U.S.C. §103(a) rejection.

35 U.S.C. §103(a)

Claims 17 and 29

Per the instant Office Action, Claims 17 and 29 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Sedlar, Gainey, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,081,832 A by Gilchrist et al. (referred to hereinafter as “Gilchrist”). Claims 17 and 29 are dependent on independent Claims 1 and 21, respectively, and include the recitations of independent Claims 1 and 21. Hence, by demonstrating that Sedlar, Gainey, Dennis, and Gilchrist do not show or suggest the limitations of Claims 1 and 21, it is also demonstrated that Sedlar, Gainey, Dennis, and Gilchrist do not show or suggest the embodiments of Claims 17 and 29.

As described above, Sedlar, Gainey, and Dennis do not teach, describe or suggest the embodiments of the claimed invention. Furthermore, Applicants respectfully submit that Gilchrist does not overcome the shortcomings of Sedlar, Gainey, and Dennis. Applicants understand Gilchrist to describe a framework for defining an e-mail message as a number of distinct object, each of which contains information that describes some portion of the message, [Abstract]. Also, Applicants understand Gilchrist to describe, “[some] objects may be active, meaning that they embody their own

thread of control. That is, such objects are not simply sequential. Active objects may have a variety of concurrency characteristics, [Col. 43, lines 50-54]. In particular, Applicants respectfully submit that Gilchrist does not teach, describe or suggest “prioritizing said at least a portion of said communications within said hierarchical structure, wherein an initial thread of said plurality of communications is assigned a higher priority than a response to a thread of said plurality of communications” and “presenting to at least a one of said plurality of users at least a portion of said plurality of communications based on said prioritization,” elements of Claim 1. Also, Applicants submit that Gilchrist does not teach, “an initial priority-based content placement module for determining a priority assignment for an initial communication of said plurality of communications” and “a response priority-based content placement module for determining a priority assignment for a response communication of said plurality of communications, wherein said priority assignment for a response communication is lower than said priority assignment for an initial communication,” elements of Claim 21.

The Applicants further submit that Gilchrist does not explicitly or inherently disclose the feature of access parameters selected from the group consisting of an inclusive access in which access to each of said stored communications in a hierarchical structure is allowed except where excluded by the inherited parameters and an exclusive access in which access to each of the stored communications in a hierarchical structure is allowed only where explicitly assigned as recited in Claims 1, 21, 35, and 48.

As Sedlar, Gainey, Dennis, and Gilchrist do not teach each and every claim limitation of the Claims 1 and 21 (as discussed above), and as Office personnel have not explained why difference(s) between the prior art and the claimed invention would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art, and as Claims 17 and 29 are dependent, respectively, on Claims 1 and 21, Applicants respectfully submit that Claims 17 and 29 overcome the 35 U.S.C. §103(a) rejection. As such, Applicants respectfully submit that Claims 17 and 29 are allowable as pending from allowable base Claims and reciting additional features.

35 U.S.C. §103(a)

Claims 22-23, 26 and 32-33

Per the instant Office Action, Claims 22-23, 26 and 32-33 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Sedlar, Gainey, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,718,535 B1 by Underwood (referred to hereinafter as “Underwood”). Claims 22-23, 26 and 32-33 are dependent on independent Claim 21, and include the recitations of independent Claim 21. Hence, by demonstrating that Sedlar, Gainey, Dennis, and Underwood do not show or suggest the limitations of

Claim 21, it is also demonstrated that Sedlar, Gainey, Dennis, and Underwood do not show or suggest the embodiments of Claims 22-23, 26 and 32-33.

As described above, Sedlar, Gainey, and Dennis do not teach, describe or suggest the embodiments of the claimed invention. Furthermore, Applicants respectfully submit that Underwood does not overcome the shortcomings of Sedlar, Gainey, and Dennis. Applicants understand Underwood to describe a system and method for providing an activity framework, [Abstract]. In particular, Applicants respectfully submit that Underwood does not teach, describe or suggest “an initial priority-based content placement module for determining a priority assignment for an initial communication of said plurality of communications” and “a response priority-based content placement module for determining a priority assignment for a response communication of said plurality of communications, wherein said priority assignment for a response communication is lower than said priority assignment for an initial communication,” elements of Claim 21.

The Applicants further submit that Underwood does not explicitly or inherently disclose the feature of access parameters selected from the group consisting of an inclusive access in which access to each of said stored communications in a hierarchical structure is allowed except where excluded by the inherited parameters and an exclusive access in which access to each of the stored communications in a hierarchical structure is allowed only where explicitly assigned as recited in Claims 1, 21, 35, and 48.

As Sedlar, Gainey, Dennis, and Underwood do not teach each and every claim limitation of the Claim 21 (as discussed above), and as Office personnel have not explained why difference(s) between the prior art and the claimed invention would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art, and as Claims 22-23, 26 and 32-33 are dependent on Claim 21, Applicants respectfully submit that Claims 22-23, 26 and 32-33 overcome the 35 U.S.C. §103(a) rejection. As such, Applicants respectfully submit that Claims 22-23, 26 and 32-33 are allowable as pending from an allowable base Claim and reciting additional features.

CONCLUSION

Based on the arguments presented above, Applicants respectfully assert that Claims 1-10, 12-35, 37-48, and 50-57 overcome the rejections of record, and therefore, Applicants respectfully solicit allowance of these Claims.

The Examiner is invited to contact Applicants' undersigned representative if the Examiner believes such action would expedite resolution of the present Application.

Respectfully submitted,
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